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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/SPG  
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SUBJECT: FRANCE, EUFOR ISSUE CONFLICTING STATEMENTS ON FALLEN  
SOLDIER IN DARFUR

¶1. (SBU) The European Union repatriated the body of a soldier from the EU peacekeeping force in Chad, EUFOR, on March 7, as French President Sarkozy and EUFOR commander Patrick Nash issued conflicting statements on the events leading to the soldier's death. While Nash apologized to Sudan for his peacekeepers "accidentally" crossing into Sudanese territory, Sarkozy condemned the Sudanese military for using "disproportionate force." EU Special Representative for Sudan and EUFOR political representative Torben Brylle is "associating himself" with Nash's statement, Brylle's political advisor told Poloff on March 9.

¶2. (SBU) The French Embassy in Khartoum has characterized Sudan as "relatively cooperative" in investigating the circumstances of the death. Brylle, who met with Sudanese officials in Khartoum on March 7, considers the issue with Sudan "closed," said his political advisor. EUFOR positively identified the body on March 7 and is awaiting an autopsy in France before making any further determination, according to a French political officer in Khartoum.

¶3. (U) On March 9, the "Sudan Tribune" reported that Sudan submitted a request to the EU for compensation pertaining to the incident. This would presumably include compensation for the families of the nomads who reportedly died when they were trying to place the body of the fallen soldier on a camel and a grenade exploded.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: Sudan is seeking to gain maximum benefit from this incident to ensure that EUFOR respects Sudan's border. Mistakes will occur, though, and it is somewhat alarming (though not surprising given Sudanese sensitivities) that Sudanese troops apparently are under orders to fire without question at Western soldiers who cross the border into Darfur. Several questions remain, such as why the Sudanese soldiers did not assist the fallen French soldier after incapacitating him, and how the remaining members of the French EUFOR patrol returned to Chad without their vehicle, which reportedly was disabled and has not yet been recovered from Western Sudan. Certainly, the whole sorry incident seems to show a EUFOR force struggling to get itself established and acclimated to a new and difficult task.

FERNANDEZ